

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-12 (Cancelled).

13. (Currently Amended) A vacuum packaging appliance for use in evacuating a container, said vacuum packaging appliance comprising:

a vacuum source;

a base defining an upper support surface and including a trough, said upper support surface and said trough adapted to receive an open end of said container, said trough useful for capturing liquids and contaminants removed from said container during operation of said vacuum packaging appliance, said trough removable from said base; ~~and~~

a lid operatively associated with said base, said lid moveable to a closed position and having a portion engaging a portion of said removable trough in a sealing manner, said lid and said ~~and~~ trough defining a vacuum chamber there between to receive said open end of said container, said vacuum chamber operatively coupled with said vacuum source; and

said lid including a latching element cooperating with the base for securing the lid in the closed position.

14. (Original) A vacuum packaging appliance as recited in claim 13, wherein said vacuum packaging appliance further comprises a heat sealing mechanism arranged to heat seal said open end of said container.

15. (Original) A vacuum packaging appliance as recited in claim 13, wherein said trough is coupled to said base via a tongue and groove such that a user may remove said trough by pulling said trough in a sliding motion out from said base.

16. (Original) A vacuum packaging appliance as recited in claim 15, wherein said trough has a handle for ease of pulling said trough from said base.

17. (Original) A vacuum packaging appliance as recited in claim 16, wherein said handle of said trough can be hidden behind a door in said base, said trough only removable when said door is open.

18-22 (Cancelled).

23. (Currently Amended) A method of operating a vacuum packaging appliance to evacuate a container, said vacuum packaging appliance having a lid and a base that must be engaged during operation in order to properly evacuate said container, said method comprising:

inserting a removable trough into said vacuum packaging appliance, said removable trough engagable with said lid when said lid is in a closed position, said trough arranged to capture at least some of any contaminants evacuated from said container during operation of said vacuum packaging appliance;

coupling an open end of said container with a vacuum source and said trough, thereby forming a vacuum circuit suitable for evacuating said container when said vacuum source is operating;

~~engaging~~ latching said lid ~~and to~~ said base in a manner intended to close said vacuum circuit;

evacuating said container via said vacuum circuit; and

capturing said at least some of any contaminants in said removable trough.

24. (Original) A method of operating a vacuum packaging appliance to evacuate a container as recited in claim 23, wherein inserting said removable trough includes: opening a bay door in said vacuum packaging appliance; sliding said removable trough into a groove found behind said bay door; and closing said bay door.

25. (Original) A method of operating a vacuum packaging appliance to evacuate a container as recited in claim 24, wherein said bay door is part of said base, and said removable trough resides in said base when inserted in said vacuum packaging appliance.

26. (Original) A method as recited in claim 23, further comprising: sensing a contaminant level within said removable trough.

27. (Original) A method of operating a vacuum packaging appliance to evacuate a container as recited in claim 26, further comprising: providing a warning feedback to a user when said contaminant level reaches a predefined level.

28. (Original) A method of operating a vacuum packaging appliance to evacuate a container as recited in claim 23, further comprising: removing said removable trough from said vacuum packaging appliance; and cleaning said removable trough.

29-33 (Cancelled).

34. (New) A method of operating a vacuum packaging appliance to evacuate a container, said vacuum packaging appliance having a lid and a base that must be engaged during operation in order to properly evacuate said container, said method comprising:

inserting a removable trough into said vacuum packaging appliance, said trough arranged to capture at least some of any contaminants evacuated from said container during operation of said vacuum packaging appliance, and wherein inserting said removable trough includes opening a bay door in said vacuum packaging appliance; sliding said removable trough into a groove found behind said bay door; and closing said bay door;

coupling an open end of said container with a vacuum source and said trough, thereby forming a vacuum circuit suitable for evacuating said container when said vacuum source is operating;

engaging said lid and said base in a manner intended to close said vacuum circuit; evacuating said container via said vacuum circuit; and

capturing said at least some of any contaminants in said removable trough.